



*"With a Ranger's hat and shovel
and a pair of dungarees,
you will find him in the forest
always sniffin' at the breeze.
People stop and pay attention
when he tells 'em to beware,
'cause ev'rybody knows that
he's the Fire Prevention Bear."*
—"Smokey the Bear" Song,
Eddy Arnold 1952

Prowlin' & Growlin' for 75 Years: Smokey Bear

In August, the world celebrated the 75th Birthday of an iconic bear—Smokey—with parties and educational events about how to prevent wildfires

BY LAUREN C. NIELSEN. PHOTOS BY LAUREN C. NIELSEN & THE USDA FOREST SERVICE

What bear is that song referring to? Well, Smokey Bear, of course!

The bear, wearing dungarees and a Ranger's hat, has been spreading his iconic message across the United States and the world for over 75 years: "Only YOU can prevent wildfires!"

That's right, 2019 marks the 75th Birthday of Smokey Bear. Smokey Bear was originally created on August 9, 1944 as part of a wildfire prevention campaign by the USDA Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Ad Council.

Smokey made his radio debut in a series of commercials. After that, Smokey Bear's ad campaign grew to covering TV, radio, posters, stamps, billboards, memorabilia, and more.

Originally, the beloved icon's slogan in 1944 was "Smokey Says – Care Will Prevent 9 out of 10 Forest Fires." It then changed in 1947 to become "Remember... Only YOU Can Prevent Forest Fires." And then, in 2001, the catchphrase evolved again to "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires." The final change came after wildfires were spreading rapidly across the United States, not only in forests but in all kinds of natural areas.

Smokey's beginnings

As the longest-running public service advertising campaign in United States' history, Smokey's message to help prevent wildfires is as urgent today as it was 75 years ago. Millions of people in the United States have now grown up with Smokey sharing his message on wildfire prevention. He first appeared on a campaign poster in 1944 and two years later, he was featured on a series of stamps. Then in the 1950s,

Smokey in real life

While Smokey's history of promoting wildfire prevention is well-known across the United States, what many don't know is that there was an orphaned bear cub who was rescued and became the real life Smokey Bear.

As the story goes, a major wildfire was discovered in the Capitan Mountains of New Mexico in 1950. Crews were dispatched to fight the fire and were notified of a bear cub wandering alone nearby. Soon, however, the crew was caught in the direct path of the blaze. They survived, mostly unscathed, but the little bear cub was not so lucky. He did survive but had burned paws and legs.

After his recuperation, the little bear cub became the living symbol



BEAR ICONS



of Smokey Bear and was moved to live out his days in the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Smokey died in 1976 but was returned to his home and buried at the Smokey Bear Historical Park in Capitan, New Mexico.

Wildfire education

The iconic bear, with his song and catchphrase, is only the start to what Smokey stands for. Smokey's main purpose is to help educate the public about wildfires. Did you know that in 2018, 89% of wildfires in the United States were caused by humans? Most of these wildfires could also have been prevented. How? Here are some things that Smokey Bear would like everyone

to do when having a fire:

- Light a fire only when an adult is present and in charge
 - Keep young children and pets away from fires
 - When camping, make sure your campfire is a safe distance from your tent and other things that could burn
 - Use rocks to create a fire ring in the center of a large cleared area
 - Use the Drown-Stir-Drown-Feel method to safely put out your campfire
- And here are some things you should never do:
- Don't start a campfire when it's windy
 - Never leave a fire unattended
 - Completely put out your fire before

you leave it

- Don't use flammable liquids to start a fire
- Don't just use dirt or sand to extinguish a fire—use water too!
- Don't bury warm or hot coals/ashes in a fire pit
- Don't burn glass, cans, plastics or garbage
- Don't play or goof around near a campfire

Following these steps is important to keeping yourself and your surroundings safe while also enjoying a lovely campfire!

Celebrating 75 years

In addition to remembering all



the steps for having a safe campfire experience, we at Teddy Bear Times & Friends also celebrated with Smokey Bear at his birthday party!

With his birthday on August 9, 2019, all across the nation people celebrated Smokey's big day with parties and events. These included picnics, State Fairs, sing-a-longs, and more.

Teddy Bear Times & Friends' US Editor, Lauren Nielsen, attended the Smokey Bear 75th Birthday Celebration at the Minnesota State Fair on August 23, 2019:

Arriving a little early, the celebration was to be held outside of the DNR Building on one of the building's events stages. When approaching the building, I immediately noticed the Fire Danger sign, with a cutout of Smokey Bear himself beside it. For the record, the Fire Danger was LOW that day, here in Minnesota.

I could tell that the celebration was going to be a special event for all, as swarms of people were crowded around several tables with a "Happy 75th Birthday, Smokey!" sign hanging above. Along the tables were informative brochures, coloring sheets and other activities for kids, wildfire prevention quiz sheets, prizes, and more! As I walked by, I then saw the statue of Smokey Bear. Of course, people were taking pictures with him, so I had to ask a passerby to kindly oblige me in taking my photo. They were happy to, of course.

I then meandered around to the side of the building where a Fire Lookout

Tower is located. Right below the tower was a small log cabin building with the words "Fire Prevention Building" beside it. I knew that this was certainly a place to go to learn more about Smokey and his mission!

Of course, right away, I spotted them—a plexiglass case filled with several Smokey Bear teddy bears. Each wore a Ranger hat, dungarees and carried a shovel. The rest of the building included displays on sites where wildfires had started and spread in Minnesota's history, lookout towers in Minnesota, information on extinguishing wildfires, and more.

After being educated by the informative displays in the Fire Prevention Building, I moseyed on over to the DNR stage where a musical group called The Roe Family Singers was just finishing up a set. Smokey Bear's 75th Birthday Celebration was next on the

schedule! The crowd cleared out after the music and then more people filled in the aluminum bleachers. People of all ages were in attendance, from parents with their little ones, to retirees, to young adults. To start out the celebration, a local Ranger presented on wildfires in the United States and, in particular, Minnesota. Then he talked about Smokey Bear and a little of his history.

After the presentation, we had to call Smokey Bear on stage by repeating altogether his catchphrase, "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires!" And along came Smokey Bear, accompanied by a friend to help him on stage—he is 75 after all! Once Smokey Bear was on stage, we all got a cupcake-shaped stress ball with the Smokey 75th Birthday logo on it and we sang Happy Birthday to Smokey Bear as a group. Then, we sang Smokey's favorite song, "Smokey the Bear", accompanied by The Roe Family Singers on vocals and instruments.

You too can celebrate Smokey's birthday, with a few last upcoming events that can be found on the Smokey Bear website, including the debut of Smokey's new character balloon in the 93rd Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

It was a lovely day to celebrate an iconic bear such as Smokey, and to learn all about wildfire prevention. And remember, only YOU can prevent wildfires!

To learn more about Smokey Bear and wildfire prevention, visit www.smokeybear.com

